

Department of Human Services

Articles in Today's Clips Friday, February 2, 2007

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February 2, 2007

State loses credibility on Abraham case

Human Services director rightly apologizes to Oakland prosecutor

The Detroit News

The state Human Services Department has just admitted that it didn't tell the truth about some of the assistance the state has promised just-released killer Nathan Abraham. But it still isn't owning up to all of the benefits that both the Oakland County prosecutor's office and Abraham's own attorney say he had been promised. Frankly, the state has no credibility left on this issue.

A report by this newspaper, quoting Chief Assistant Oakland Prosecutor Deborah Carley and Abraham's attorney, Daniel Bagdade, noted nearly two weeks ago that Abraham had been promised assistance with both housing and college tuition.

After the initial story appeared, the state agency, in the face of an uproar, denied that the aid package had already been arranged, despite the fact that Carley and Bagdade stuck to their interpretation.

Now, Human Services Director Marianne Udow has issued apologies to Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Carley and Bagdade for what Udow called "misstatements" by members of her staff. The department is admitting that it had agreed to give Abraham \$1,200 in state funds for housing. The state continues to deny that it offered Abraham tuition assistance.

Abraham was released last month at age 21 after serving in juvenile custody for his murder, while an 11-year-old, of 18-year-old Ronnie Greene Jr.

The problem isn't that Abraham is continuing to get state assistance. Most killers, mercifully, aren't 11 year-olds. Someone who has spent large portions of his childhood and adolescence in custody can be expected to have adjustment problems and is a good candidate for continued aid. It's a better investment than allowing him to return to prison at a cost of more than \$30,000 per year.

But the incident reveals that the first instinct of some Human Services Department officials was to cover up when confronted with an unfavorable public reaction. And it has to work with local prosecutors and lawyers every day. In effect, it unfairly called the chief assistant Oakland prosecutor and Abraham's attorney liars.

That's not very smart. Why did it take the department two weeks to figure that out? And why should we believe the rest of what it says about this case?

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Abraham owes state, not other way around

February 2, 2007

BY ROCHELLE RILEY

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Much has been made in recent weeks about what the state of Michigan promised to Nathaniel Abraham when he was released from custody two weeks ago.

Abraham shot an 18-year-old to death when he was 11 and was sentenced to 10 years for it. He spent the last six months of his sentence in a halfway house, but upon his release he moved to an apartment.

Apparently, some official promised that the state would reimburse him for his apartment security deposit and other "starting out" costs. Someone somewhere realized that that was a mistake and left Abraham's attorney, Daniel Bagdade, trying to make the state live up to a promise its officials initially claimed they didn't make.

The confusion led a state representative to call for a hearing, led some people to wonder aloud whether someone had lied to Abraham and resulted in palpable resentment rising among taxpayers wondering why they were not asked whether their money could be used for this young man's re-entry into society.

The best lessons

As taxpayers, we already pay to help ex-convicts re-enter society. But I don't want them to expect a check as if they are "owed." The state doesn't owe Abraham. Abraham owes the state.

The first lesson for the state's youngest convicted killer should not be: How to be a victim.

Abraham owes the judge who released him. He owes the family of the man he killed -- more than an Oprah-brokered apology. He owes the private parties who want him to rebound from his tragic beginnings to become someone who lives beyond expectations.

He owes them commitment and passion and a work ethic so strong that no one will ever believe that he's not serious about becoming a good man.

Teaching him to expect something for nothing is no way to help him achieve any goals. Teaching him to earn his way, to work for what he gets, those are good lessons.

An offer to help

Abraham should find out about the private programs that can make his own personal renaissance easier. One has already reached out to him. Goodwill Industries "Flip the Script" program, which helps former inmates turn their lives around, wants to help. The program's director called Abraham's attorney after my last column, saying, "We can be a conduit." I hope Abraham takes them up on their offer.

And as for well-intentioned state Rep. Kim Meltzer, a Republican from Clinton Township who wanted to convene a hearing to find out what Abraham was owed -- we don't need the state House Committee on Oversight and Investigations to deal with Nathaniel Abraham.

That committee, instead, should be holding hearings on the actions of the state foster care system, after a Free Press report on the death of little Isaac Lethbridge.

Now, the state *does* owe Isaac.

But Abraham? He must determine his fate -- with private help, personal conviction and the

realization that he's starting from scratch and he has to make it on his own.

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BRIAN DICKERSON

Counting the ways we resent Nate

February 2, 2007

BY BRIAN DICKERSON

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

If you're sick of reading about Nathaniel Abraham, here's good news: This column isn't about him.

It's about the rest of us: You, me, our fellow taxpayers and the publicity-hungry politicians who regard any state assistance for Abraham as the biggest outrage since O.J. Simpson's book deal.

Exactly what the state Department of Human Services has offered Abraham has been in dispute ever since he was released from juvenile detention for the murder of 18-year-old Ronnie Greene Jr.

Chief Oakland County Prosecutor Deborah Carley got her suburban constituents riled up when she disclosed DHS's plans to provide Abraham with two years of rent and up to four years of community college tuition. Carley said she was furious because the assistance was being supplied under the auspices of a program designed to help former foster children, not juvenile felons.

A case of cold feet?

Carley and Abraham's attorney, Daniel Bagdade, said DHS officials outlined their offer of assistance in a meeting shortly before Abraham's Jan. 18 release. DHS initially denied making any promises, then finally acknowledged that it had pledged about \$1,200 to pay Abraham's security deposit and first month's rent. The agency's waffling prompted another suburban opportunist, Rep. Kim Meltzer, R-Clinton Township, to demand legislative hearings into Abraham's assistance package.

Carley's assertion that DHS backpedaled after adverse reaction to its initial rent-and-tuition offer is probably accurate. But what really interests me is the mind-set that made that assistance so controversial in first place.

In some instances -- I am thinking especially of Ronnie Greene's survivors -- the resentment Abraham evokes is understandable. In others, it's irrational, the reaction of petulant taxpayers who'd rather spend hundreds of thousands to incarcerate youthful felons like Abraham forever than invest a fraction of that in occupational training or housing assistance.

Fear of success

Then there are those whose hostility toward Abraham is politically calculated.

Carley, who hopes to succeed Prosecutor David Gorcyca when he leaves office in 2008, has a lot invested in Abraham's failure. It was her office that made the controversial decision to prosecute the then-11-year-old Abraham as an adult; the last thing she wants now is to vindicate Oakland County Circuit Judge Eugene Moore's decision to treat Abraham as a salvageable kid. No wonder Carley resents those who would smooth Abraham's path to redemption.

Meltzer is ostensibly concerned that any assistance provided to Abraham will deprive more deserving wards of the state. But if resources for neglected children are that scarce - - and they are -- perhaps she and her GOP colleagues need to rethink the \$50-million business tax cut they're proposing.

The real danger is the mind-set that regards tuition assistance and decent housing as perks reserved for only the most sympathetic cases. As long as that attitude prevails, Michigan's future will remain as problematic as Abraham's.

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With Oprah watching, Abraham apologizes to victim's kin

February 2, 2007

BY FRANK WITSIL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

For nearly a decade, Chris Greene harbored resentment toward the man who killed his older brother, but when that man stood in Oprah Winfrey's office in Chicago and apologized to Greene and his family, his heart softened.

"I have forgiven him," Greene, 25, of Pontiac said Thursday. "It takes a man to tell how he feels."

As a free man, Nathaniel Abraham, 21, traveled to Chicago as a guest of the talk show host and said he was sorry for killing Ronnie Greene Jr. in 1997.

Initially, the encounter was supposed to be taped Wednesday in a studio, Abraham's attorney Daniel Bagdade said. But, Bagdade said, he thought it would be more appropriate -- and sincere -- if Abraham shared the thoughts he'd wished to express for a long time out of the glare of the media.

At 11, Abraham became the youngest person in Michigan charged with murder as an adult. He was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced as a juvenile.

But in Chicago -- in posh surroundings and the presence of a celebrity known for her empathetic interviews -- the mood was of reconciliation.

"They came together," Bagdade said. "The room was so full of emotion and so full of love and forgiveness. You can't put it into words."

Bagdade gave this account of the meeting, which Chris Greene confirmed:

Wearing a gray pin-striped suit, Abraham stood and faced Greene's relatives -- his mother, Robin Greene; sister, Nichole Edwards; brother, Chris Greene; uncle, Marty Hayden, and grandmother, JoAnn Hayden -- and said he was sorry. His voice wavered, and his eyes teared. He talked about what happened that October day and said he never meant to hurt Ronnie Greene.

He said his goal is to live his life in honor of Ronnie Greene.

The family, through tears, said they forgave him. And Abraham hugged each of them.

Abraham's mother, Gloria Abraham, and Robin Greene embraced.

Afterward, Bagdade said, Winfrey asked Abraham how he felt. He let out a long sigh and said he had mixed feelings. He said he felt good the victim's family heard what he had to say, but knew that they were still hurting.

The meeting will not be aired -- and Abraham was not financially compensated, said a spokeswoman for Harpo Inc., Winfrey's production company. There also are no plans for a future show, she added.

Bagdade said the idea for the meeting began years ago when Abraham asked whether he could meet Winfrey, someone he deeply admired. Then, two months ago, Bagdade said he talked with show producers about taping a segment involving an apology. On Tuesday, Abraham met with Winfrey, who spent time counseling him.

According to Bagdade, Winfrey took Abraham to task for what he wore the day he was released -- a flashy suit, pink alligator shoes and rabbit coat. Abraham acknowledged that

looking back, it was the wrong choice of attire.

Winfrey advised him to take the job he needs now, so he can work toward the job he wants. After his release, he was hired as a janitor in a factory, but he aspires to work in the music industry. Bagdade said that someone on Winfrey's staff has gotten Abraham a job at a Bay City restaurant.

And, Bagdade said, Winfrey told Abraham he has a great opportunity to set an example for young people who are in trouble and that she would be watching him.

Contact **FRANK WITSIL** at 248-351-3690 or witsil@freepress.com. Staff writer Desiree Cooper contributed to this report.

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Nate apologizes

Dramatic moment with Oprah won't be aired

Of The Oakland Press

After almost a decade, the youngest person charged with murder in Michigan finally offered a full apology to the family of the man he killed when he was just 11, inspired by Oprah Winfrey to do so, his attorney said Thursday.

Defense attorney Daniel Bagdade said he advised Nathaniel Abraham to scrap a planned taping of Winfrey's popular talk show that was to showcase the apology, deciding it should be done in private.

The family of Ronnie Greene Jr., a Pontiac man who was 18 when killed by Abraham, accepted the apology, according to a victim advocate for the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office.

Afterward, Winfrey offered 21-year-old Abraham - an admirer of Winfrey's - advice on how to get through life, Bagdade said.

"In my 33 years of practicing law, it was the most riveting, emotional moment I ever experienced," said Bagdade, who attended the meeting with Abraham and his mother. "He gave a very heartfelt remorseful apology. It was very moving. The Greene family was very tearful."

With them were five members of Ronnie Greene Jr.'s family, including his sister and mother, and the queen of daytime television, Oprah Winfrey.

The talk show host had planned to tape a show on Wednesday featuring the two sides with the apology to be the highlight, Bagdade said.

Bagdade said that Abraham has long wanted to offer a full apology, but felt he did not have the right opportunity to do so in open court, and the attorney said also he recommended against an apology in court.

"He never had the opportunity to go into the detail the way he wanted to," Bagdade said.

Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley said she only wishes it would have come earlier.

"I went to court every three months and so did the victim's family," Carley said. "I don't know what they are talking about a 'lack of an opportunity.' He had 10 years to say he's sorry and it takes Oprah to be the intermediary for an apology. That seems strange to me. "You should not have to go to Illinois for an apology. When you are in the same county and same city, it would seem easy to give an apology. To me, it's still awfully late."

Carley felt the apology could have come in writing if Abraham did not want to address it in court.

Bagdade declined to give details about the specific apology, including whether Abraham referred to whether or not he intended to shoot Greene, and Greene's family could not be reached for comment.

"He apologized for what he did," Bagdade said. "He said the best thing he can do right now is live his life in honor of Ronnie Greene."

Emily McIntyre, a victim advocate who has worked with the Greene family for nearly a decade, did speak to Ronnie's sister, Nichole Edwards.

"She said that it was a good thing and that he did apologize," McIntyre said. "They did accept, and they did feel good about it. She said she is just too drained to speak to the media."

McIntyre added that Edwards said Abraham also apologized for wearing the ivory-colored pinstripe suit with pink shirt, tie and alligator leather shoes to his final court hearing in January.

Bagdade said the Abraham spoke with the Greene family for 15 minutes and then was lectured by Winfrey.

Winfrey then pressed Abraham about how to be successful - by having a good attitude - and told him he could be a role model to young people who find themselves in trouble, Bagdade said.

The attorney said Abraham has long been a fan of Winfrey's and has a "great admiration for her and what she has stood for."

"She spent so much time lecturing him," Bagdade said. "She told him so many things about life, about experiences in her life and how to live life in the future. She said, 'Whatever you do, strive to be the best at that you can be.'"

"She said, 'First do the job that you need to do; then move on to the job that you want to do.'"

Bagdade said Abraham was all ears.

"He just listened with rapt attention," Bagdade said. "He hung on her every word."

He further said that Winfrey was "very understanding" about his decision to pull the plug on the broadcast. He said he became concerned as it was being prepared the day before, and he said Abraham agreed with the decision.

"I just felt it was going to be more effective and more beneficial to do this in private," Bagdade said. "If we were going to do it in private, there was going to be no show. I decided there was going to be no show."

Abraham was not paid, but he and the Greene family were provided airfare and lodging, Bagdade said. Abraham, who hopes to soon start a job in a restaurant, will not attempt to do any other television interviews in the near future.

Bagdade also said that the meeting was his first time to tell the Greene family how sorry he was for their loss.

"They were very gracious to me as well," he said. "They'll never know how much that meant to me."

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LOSING ISAAC: Blame goes all the way to the top

February 2, 2007

Your three-day series "Losing Isaac" was all too familiar. The heartbreak is that there are probably many more children in tenuous situations similar to the one Isaac and his sister were in.

The head of the Department of Human Services can say no more than: "This is a system at risk, there is no question"? Marianne Udow has been in the position for four years. Where is her plan for eliminating the risk? It appears there is no plan.

It is time, then, to quit scapegoating the workers, though there may be blame there, and place the responsibility for this risky system at the top, where it belongs. Gov. Jennifer Granholm should ask for her resignation.

Judith Burkhardt
Detroit

No more excuses

God Bless the Free Press for covering this issue. I hope you keep on this to make sure that something is done to bring about change for the children.

I must say that with all my contacts to the Department of Human Services, the governor, the senators and representatives of our state, I didn't get any acceptable answers, only excuses. They need to focus on the problems and how to bring about change, not on why they don't have time to do something.

Bobbie Titus
Fenton

Become foster parents

"Boy's battered body found" was the headline in the Chicago Daily Sun Times on July 29, 1953. "Losing Isaac" was the headline in the Detroit Free Press this week. They are more than 50 years apart, but the stories are so much alike.

The boy in Chicago was my brother. He was 3 years old; I was 6. When the police came, they found him wired to water pipes in a bathroom and me tied to nails by strips of sheets in a small broom closet.

My brother was one of seven children. Just like Isaac's parents, my parents would have another child every time the state took one from them due to neglect and abuse. This started in Plattsburgh, N.Y., and after my brother's death, three of us children were returned to Plattsburgh. The youngest was adopted, my sister and I would end up in even more abusive homes than the one we were "rescued" from.

Imagine if just one of out every five people who read the "Losing Isaac" series became positive, nurturing foster parents. Wow, just imagine good homes for children who need to be loved and wanted. What a difference people would make to the thousands of Isaacs just waiting for someone to love them just because they are children.

Jeanne Fowler
Big Family of Michigan, Roseville

Side with families

Your story pointed out that 40% of Michigan's foster children are placed with relatives, most of whom are in middle- or low-income brackets, and that advocates recommend making it easier to license the relative caregivers so they can receive more benefits.

Yet most of these families don't need to be part of the foster care system at all. If Congress subsidized legal guardianships for children in foster care when adoption or reunification with their parents is not an option, an estimated 20,000 children across the country who are currently in the child welfare system could leave foster care for permanent, loving homes with relatives rather than languishing in an already overloaded child welfare system.

If we truly value families, doesn't it make sense for our government to do more to help them?

Donna Butts

*Executive Director, Generations United
Washington, D.C.*

Services may be too late

The recent series on the need to reform our state foster program did an excellent job of naming some of the factors that contribute to the horror. Unfortunately, accountability, insight and personal capability are frequently lacking, and no amount of education, supervision, access to birth control, bus tickets or psych evaluations can make it happen.

Regardless of services, some people lack the foundational skills ever to be nurturing parents, just as others will never be effective social workers, attorneys or judges. The sooner we act on this truth, the better.

There is no doubt that a more nimble vehicle is necessary for the difficult journey the children and their families are on, the success of which demands not just money, but capable engineers committed to a timely and permanent home for these vulnerable children.

Mary Therese Lemanek

Allen Park

Teach responsibility

Your series "Losing Isaac" shed much light on the array of problems associated with Michigan's foster care system and the multiple organizations involved. The task in correcting the problems noted is certainly daunting, especially in these times of budget-cutting. However, there was no real exploration of the true root cause of the problem. There are simply too many women and couples who are not equipped educationally, emotionally and monetarily to successfully raise children.

Jennifer and Matthew Lethbridge have lost nine kids to the foster care system and, at age 30, Jennifer is expecting her 10th. She said: "We didn't understand completely what it takes to be good parents." That seems very obvious. If they couldn't understand it after nine children, why would anyone expect it to be better with the 10th?

I know that many improvements can be made to our current systems. But until we drastically reduce the number of babies born to couples or single women who can't properly parent, we will continue to have serious problems and too many Isaacs.

Ronald Gries

Bloomfield Hills

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Published February 2, 2007

Baby 'ice cold' when mom got home

Woman tells court husband handed her lifeless child

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

MASON - On the witness stand Thursday, Loretta Moy turned her head to avoid looking into a brown paper bag containing the red dress her 13-month-old daughter, Anishia, wore the day she died.

And when Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino asked the 21-year-old Lansing woman to identify her husband, Steve Lee Moy - who is accused of killing Anishia - she cracked a nervous, almost childlike, grin as she pointed to him.

In a soft but confident voice, Loretta Moy recounted the Aug. 2, 2006, afternoon she returned from a laundromat to find her daughter's lifeless, "ice cold" body.

"He just handed her to me," she said.

"I put my ear to her face, and she's not breathing."

Steve Moy, 39, is charged with murder and child abuse in Anishia's death. The Lansing man was home alone with his stepdaughter that afternoon, several witnesses testified.

Moy's attorney, Roderick Porter, maintains his client was not at the Pontiac Street house the entire afternoon. The Moys had been living with friends who rented the house, sleeping on couch pillows on the living room floor.

The couple married in January 2005, a few months after meeting at a homeless shelter. In November 2006, Loretta gave birth to a girl fathered by Steve Moy. Anishia had a different father.

'Please forgive me'



(Photo by Courtesy photo)

Died Aug. 2: Anishia Moy, seen in July, died of blunt force and possible suffocation, a pathologist testified.

What's next

- Testimony will continue today, and closing arguments are expected to begin this afternoon in the trial of Steve Lee Moy, who is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of his 13-month-old stepdaughter. The trial, before Chief Circuit Judge William Collette, is being held at the Ingham County Courthouse in Mason.

At Sparrow Hospital shortly after Anishia was pronounced dead, Loretta testified, Steve told her: "I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I love you."

Anishia died from internal injuries caused by blunt force and possible suffocation, according to a forensic pathologist. Steve Moy told a police officer he went to answer the door, and the infant fell off a couch.

On the evening of Aug. 2, Officer Kasha Lowe testified, she watched Moy on a television monitor - alone in an interview room at Lansing's South Precinct - "speaking to himself as if he was praying." Lowe said Moy smelled of alcohol and his speech was slightly slurred, although he denied drinking.

"Please forgive me, God. Bring her back," Lowe said she heard him say. "They're going to think I wasn't watching her because I was drinking. ... I confess all my sins."

Under cross examination by Porter, Lowe - who said she did not videotape the incident because she did not know how to use the equipment - was asked if Moy ever admitted killing Anishia.

"No, he did not," she said.

33 unexplained bruises

One aspect of the case that remains unclear: 33 bruises on Anishia's arms, legs and torso a forensic pathologist found, which he said were days or weeks old.

Loretta Moy testified Thursday that she bathed Anishia the night before her death and never noticed any bruises. She said her daughter was wearing a red, tank-top dress the afternoon she died.

A social worker who saw Anishia about five hours before she was taken to the hospital testified she never suspected the girl was injured or in pain. Mary Ashley had been working with Anishia for several months, mostly trying to help her learn to crawl.

"When you left her, was this just a happy, healthy child?" Assistant Prosecutor Lisa McCormick asked.

"It appeared that way to me," Ashley said.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published February 1, 2007

Police officer testifies stepdad confessed his sins

midday update

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

MASON — A police officer testified today that Steve Lee Moy "confessed his sins" while alone in an interview room at the Lansing Police Department's South Precinct and repeatedly said he was sorry.

Moy, 39, is charged with murder and child abuse in the death of his stepdaughter Anishia Moy, who was killed Aug. 2, 2006.

Officer Kasha Lowe testified today that while the defendant was alone in an interview room for 20 minutes, Moy said, "Please forgive me God, bring her back." He also said, "They're going to think I wasn't watching her because I was drinking. I confess all my sins," according to Lowe.

On cross examination, Lowe — who said she did not videotape the incident because she could not run the equipment — was asked if Moy ever admitted killing his stepdaughter.

"No he did not," the officer responded.

Earlier in the day, a social worker who saw Anishia about five hours before her bruised and lifeless body was taken to the hospital testified she never saw anything that led her to believe the girl was in pain. Mary Ashley has been working with Anishia for several months, mostly trying to help her learn to crawl.

When Ashley arrived Aug. 2 at the house where the Moys were staying, she said Anishia was "happy to see me and she bounced."

She also said Steve Moy was watching TV while she was there.

"When you left her, was this just a happy healthy child?" assistant prosecutor Lisa McCormick asked Ashley.

"It appeared that way to me," Ashley responded.

The trial began Monday before Chief Judge William Collette at the Ingham County Courthouse in Mason. Moy could face life in prison if convicted.



No crime found in biting case

Friday, February 02, 2007

By Nate Reens

The Grand Rapids Press

SPARTA -- As the bruises and bite marks on Mason Sullivan heal, the 9-month-old's family is trying to reconcile their feelings after hearing his day-care provider won't face criminal charges for allegedly allowing other children to injure him.

Beth Sullivan, Mason's mother, learned Thursday that Kent County prosecutors have declined to charge Amber Marks, the boy's unlicensed sitter, because they could not find a violation on her part.

Mason was bitten about 20 times on Jan. 24 at Marks' home on Union Street, Beth Sullivan said. He suffered injuries on his face, head, arms and back.

Sullivan took the boy to the hospital after Marks denied knowing how Mason was hurt, although she admitted her two foster children have a history of biting.

"There's some people real upset, wondering how a child can be bitten that many times and have someone say they don't know what happened," Sullivan said. "It seems like there would be something, some law that would cover that.

"It's disappointing, but the bigger thing is that Mason is doing better. He's happy even though there are still some bruises."

Marks could not be reached for comment.

Sparta Police Chief Andrew Milanowski said Officer Brian Wheeler's investigation found that Marks had left the room where Mason was sleeping and the bites are believed to be from one of the foster children.

Sullivan is sure her son would have cried for help, but police could not substantiate that based on an interview with Marks, Sullivan said.

Milanowski said Marks' foster children were removed by Child Protective Services when the investigation into the biting case began.

Since Mason was injured, Sullivan, a 25-year-old single mother, said an extended support system has helped care for the boy while she works as a dietary specialist at a retirement village.

It's unclear whether Marks could face state sanctions for running an unlicensed day care.

State law requires people who care for an unrelated child in their home for more than four weeks annually to be licensed with the Department of Human Services.

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County news

Detroit Free Press

February 2, 2007

OAKLAND COUNTY: New toll-free line set to take abuse complaints

The Michigan Department of Human Services in Oakland County now has a toll-free number to handle reports of suspected adult or child abuse and neglect.

The number, 866-975-5010, is intended only for reporting incidents in Oakland County.

The DHS said the hotline was implemented to create faster response times, address the growing number of abuse complaints and assist those who must promptly report suspected child abuse and neglect.

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February 2, 2007

Law enforcement lobbies for child care

Top cops, prosecutors ask Stabenow to push for Head Start cash boost to aid crime fight.

Associated Press

Michigan sheriffs and prosecuting attorneys this week urged Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, to be a champion for expanding and improving Head Start, Early Head Start and educational child care for low-income working families in next year's budget to cut crime.

Clinton County Sheriff Wayne Kangas and Alpena County Prosecutor Dennis Grenkowicz met with Stabenow in her Washington, D.C., office.

Washtenaw County Prosecutor Brian Mackie, Marquette County Prosecutor Gary Walker and Muskegon Police Chief Tony Kleibecker participated in the meeting by phone.

Funding for Head Start and the Child Care Development Grant -- a federal grant that helps low-income working parents afford child care and after-school programs for their children -- has been slashed since 2002.

Kangas urged Stabenow to seek an additional \$910 million in funding for Head Start and an additional \$720 million in funding for CCDBG, the funding needed to simply restore services to their 2002 levels.

Head Start and quality child care for low-income working families help prepare kids for school and keep them away from crime, Kangas said.

High-quality early education will also save money, Mackie added.

The savings come from lower crime, special ed and welfare costs plus increased tax revenue from higher earnings of adults who attend Head Start programs.

However, to achieve the greatest tax savings, programs need additional federal investments to reach more eligible at-risk children and improve quality standards. In Michigan, a third of all eligible 4-year-olds and 80 percent of all eligible 3-year-olds are not served by Head Start and the state-funded preschool program due to a lack of funds.

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Cassopolis Vigilant



ONLINE EDITION

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Shining some light on the area's hidden homeless

Thursday, February 1, 2007 10:59 AM EST

Thursday, Feb. 2, 2007

The stereotype of homeless people has them pushing shopping carts around full of their belongings and sleeping on grates where steam warms them or under the shelter of bridges.

The reality is more complicated - especially in a rural area, where the precariously sheltered might be seeking refuge in a barn or in tents when the weather is warmer.

Mostly they double up with friends or relatives and stay where they can until the landlord gets wise. That's the kind of homelessness seen in Cass County.

So the spaghetti-serving soup kitchen sponsored at Dowagiac's Second Baptist Church Jan. 25 seems like a practical solution.

The numbers served on this snowy Thursday were not large, but in many cases those who stopped in carried valuable information to friends who might need help, but were reluctant to stop in.

Actually reaching out to homeless people by the agencies who serve has got to be preferable to a bunch of social workers thumbing through their case files.

Not only can it be intimidating to go into the state Department of Human Services (DHS) office in Cassopolis, but for many transportation remains a hurdle. Cass can seem a lot farther than eight miles away if you don't have a reliable vehicle or can't afford the gas.

"It's amazing how many people we've seen today who ... didn't have a way to get there," said Margaret Shultz, DHS community resources coordinator.

Another successful aspect of the soup kitchen was seeing the various agencies collaborating from DHS to the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency.

The state may not be able to immediately quantify the effectiveness of \$1,000 grants by which it seeded this year's homeless count, but if the bridges built in a place with as little bureaucracy as Cass County continue, it will be money well spent.

For the agencies, getting out of the office and into the field not only means a more accurate count, but their presence helps restore a sense of community to an isolated population. If they had families to take them in, they probably wouldn't be homeless.

DHS seems to realize how valuable such connecting steps could prove.

"We could be a lot more friendly sometimes at the agencies," Shultz conceded.

Cassopolis Vigilant

**ONLINE EDITION**[Print Page](#)

Homeless invited to dinner

By JOHN EBY / Cassopolis Vigilant
Thursday, February 1, 2007 10:58 AM EST

DOWAGIAC - The county's experimental "soup kitchen" actually served spaghetti.

"We've had 15 to 20 people," said Margaret Shultz, community resources coordinator for the state Department of Human Services Cass County office in Cassopolis. "We didn't have any clue" how many to expect, "and when it was snowing this morning on my way into work, I was afraid nobody was going to be here."

Also heartening to the homeless counters who sponsored the soup kitchen was that people who did venture out carried information back to friends who were more reluctant to appear.

"I think it went great," Shultz said mid-afternoon of the 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. event last Thursday at Second Baptist Church. "We've never done this before. Every year we have to do a homeless count, which we normally do with caseworkers going through their files and counting all the people they know are homeless. We're still doing that, but the state put some money out in small \$1,000 grants for counties to do these special events connected to the homeless count today."

"It's amazing how many people we've seen today who didn't know where to go or who their worker was or didn't have a way to get there," Shultz said. "It's kind of nice because all the different agencies which have been here, we can do some linkages. The first couple I talked to this morning, CAA (Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency, which has an office in Cassopolis) helped them out with a part of it, (DHS) helped them out with a part of it, then we sent them over to St. Vincent DePaul (on W. Railroad Street) so they could get coats. They had a lot of needs. All together, we could sit down at the table and figure out who could do what part. It's a comfortable atmosphere. They didn't have to come in to our office (on M-60, between Cass District Library and the Law and Courts Building) and sit in the lobby. This is closer. These people were in Castle Inn motel here in Dowagiac. Their car's barely running, so getting back and forth to Cassopolis is not the easiest thing in the world."

"This has been a very good experience," Shultz said.

Walter Swann, the Police Athletic League (PAL) boxing coach, said, "It would be nice to have a soup kitchen in the winter months to help people out."

"The sense of community" helps, Shultz said. Precariously housed or homeless people tend to be somewhat isolated. "They don't have family or people who can help them out or take them in," she said. "Just being able to make some connections is a really important part of the whole process. (Outreach) is something we're going to have to be thinking about. We could be a lot more friendly sometimes at the agencies."

"When people think of homeless, they think of people living in boxes on the street over steam," Shultz said. "We don't see that in rural areas, but I'll betch you there are barns that have people in them. We know there are people who live in tents in the summer time. And lots of people are doubled up, staying wherever they can until the landlord figures out they're there. That's more of the kind of homelessness we see."

Rural homeless "are a lot more hidden," she said, "which makes it harder because there's not so much public will to do something about it because people think it doesn't exist."

The Jan. 25 soup kitchen was funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) through a Project Homeless Connect Grant.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

State to cut youths and staff at Maxey

Friday, February 02, 2007

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT

News Staff Reporter

State budget cuts will reduce the number of high-security youths and workers at Maxey Boys Training School in Green Oak Township. The change, coming later this month, is expected to save the state \$2.2 million.

The state also will save \$2.3 million by closing Arbor Heights, a juvenile halfway house in Ann Arbor, said state Department of Human Services spokeswoman Karen Stock. Those total 14.8 percent of all costs for juvenile justice facilities, Stock said.

Stock said 68 staffers will be affected by the cuts, but some will be able to move to other facilities around the state by bumping lower-seniority workers. It was not clear how many state employees will lose their jobs.

Maxey holds youths who have committed the most serious felonies, those with chronic mental health and social development issues, those who committed sex offenses and those who are too aggressive for other facilities, said Stock. It is the only state-run, maximum-security facility for youth in Michigan that treats those with mental illness.

Stock said the population at Maxey will be reduced from 180 to 150, and the work force at Maxey will be reduced by 34 staffers, leaving 268.

In a letter to family court judges and court administrators, DHS reported that "national standards recommend a maximum of 150 residents, and national best practice models show that training schools are often more effective and provide higher quality programs at that capacity."

Spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said the state expects the Maxey population to drop naturally by Feb. 24, the date on which the changes are scheduled to take place.

The 20 youths housed at Arbor Heights in Ann Arbor will be moved.

She said the cost for a youth at Maxey is \$420 per day, versus \$240 per day at a private facility. Private facilities are not required to provide education programs, Stock said. Those youth get educational services through the local school districts or intermediate school districts.

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Kids who kill: Adult prosecution remains rare

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, February 02, 2007

By Bryn Mickle

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FLINT - Deborah Holmes believes teenagers should be treated as adults if they kill.

Even if it means they spend the rest of their lives in prison.

"If they don't have remorse, they should be punished the same," said Holmes, who lives near an apartment complex parking lot where prosecutors believe two young teens killed a man Jan. 18.

Holmes said teens today are different.

"They don't have any respect," said Holmes, a senior citizen who has spent her entire life in Flint.

Demorreaia D. Henry was 14 last month when police allege he shot Timothy A. Cooke, 26, several times during a robbery at Howard Estates on Howard Avenue near Lapeer Road.

Henry was charged as an adult this week with first-degree murder, which means he would face up to life in prison if convicted.

Prosecutors also charged a 13-year-old boy with murder, but charged him as a juvenile because police believe Henry fired the gun.

Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton declined to discuss details of the case, but said the allegations concerning the incident are "cold blooded" and "especially brutal."

"I believe (they) have an understanding of the consequences," said Leyton.

Henry had truancy problems last year, but it appears neither boy had been convicted of a serious offense.

Both teens were accompanied by their mothers at their respective arraignments, but Leyton questioned how much supervision they had experienced before the slaying.

"If a kid is at the Howard Estates with a gun, something is wrong," said Leyton.

There was no record of the 13-year-old attending school in the Flint School District, while school officials had conflicting information on Henry's schooling, saying they could not pin down which schools he attended.

Although it still is rare for young teens to be charged with murder, Leyton said he is concerned by what he sees as a developing pattern of younger people involved in violent crime.

There were 55 juveniles in Michigan arrested on murder charges from 2000-05, according to state police crime statistics.

In a community like Flint, where crime is a major concern, City Councilman Jim Ananich said it's tough to decide whether to charge teens as juveniles or adults.

"I don't know where you draw the line," he said.

Former Genesee County Prosecutor Arthur A. Busch said he never charged anyone younger than 15 as an adult.

"I didn't just look at the crime itself," said Busch. "You have to believe there is no hope of rehabilitation."

When Britt Kellum of Flint shot and killed two siblings in separate incidents over a four-year period in the 1980s, state law mandated that he be charged as a juvenile.

Kellum, who was 13 at the time of the second slaying in 1989, was placed in state custody until he turned 21.

A 1997 Michigan law now allows adult prosecutions of children of any age in a serious felony case.

Nathaniel Abraham became the first juvenile charged under the new law when the then-11-year-old Abraham killed a man in 1997.

He was convicted as an adult, but sentenced as a juvenile. He was released from state custody last month.

Although studies suggest overall juvenile crime hasn't gone up in recent years, Genesee Family Court Judge Duncan M. Beagle said the degree of violent crime seems to be on the rise.

Beagle worries that too many teens have no value system.

"They live for today and I'll worry about tomorrow ... later," said Beagle.

Society appears to be taking a harsher view toward juveniles who commit violent crime, said Beagle, adding the public's compassion may be trumped by the severity of crimes and safety fears.

"I see a lot of people hardening," said Beagle.

Busch agrees.

"The public's patience has grown quite thin."

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THE BAY CITY TIMES

Police detain teen they say brought gun to school

Friday, February 02, 2007

TIMES STAFF

GLADWIN - Police said they took a 16-year-old Gladwin High School student into custody on Thursday after he allegedly brought a loaded handgun to the school.

Gladwin Police Department officials said the boy showed the gun to another student while on the bus. That student told school officials about the incident, police said.

Officers said the 16-year-old entered the high school with the gun and then left the building, hiding the gun on school property.

Police ordered the high school locked down, preventing anyone from leaving or entering the school from about 9-11:30 a.m., said Patrolman Eric Killian of the Gladwin Police Department.

The 16-year-old called two adults to come to the school and remove the .22-caliber weapon, police said. The other suspects - not students at the school - took the weapon to their home near the high school where police said they eventually recovered the weapon.

Police took the 16-year-old boy to a juvenile detention facility on Thursday, Killian said.

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Man charged with torture after standoff

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, February 02, 2007

By James L. Smith

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LAPEER - A man who handcuffed his wife to a pole in the basement of their home and fired shots near her has been arraigned on several felony charges.

Kurt A. Henkel, 43, of Imlay Township surrendered to members of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department Special Emergency Response Team about 10 p.m. Wednesday after a five-hour standoff with deputies at the home on Country Pride Lane.

No one was injured, said Lapeer County Sheriff's Lt. Gary Parks.

Henkel, a veterinarian, was upset over recent domestic and financial problems with his second wife, 24, and the pending breakup of his marriage, deputies said.

Prosecutor Byron J. Konschuh issued warrants charging Henkel with torture, unlawful imprisonment, felonious assault, discharging a firearm in a dwelling, false report of a bomb and using a gun in committing a felony.

Magistrate Gregory Wise arraigned Henkel on Thursday and set bond at \$1 million. He remained in the Lapeer County Jail on Thursday.

Torture, the most serious charge, carries a maximum life sentence.

Henkel has no criminal history.

An office manager at the Imlay City Veterinary Clinic said Henkel was hired to work full time in September.

"We were shocked," said Diana Stroman. "He was a quiet man, a very competent veterinarian, and he and his family are in our thoughts and prayers."

Previously, Henkel operated the Charlevoix Veterinary Hospital in Charlevoix with his first wife.

An employee there said Thursday that Henkel left about two years ago after he and his wife divorced. The employee also said Henkel is a Michigan State University graduate and has a degree in animal pathology.

While he lived in Charlevoix, Henkel was a reserve police officer who worked summer events for the Charlevoix Police Department.

Henkel married his current wife, another employee of the Charlevoix business, and they had a daughter in March 2006.

The child was at a Lapeer Township day care center when the standoff began. The first deputies at the scene said Henkel told them that he had placed a bomb at the day care center.

A Lapeer police officer and his bomb-trained dog checked the center but found no explosives, Parks said.

The Oakland County response team sent a robot into the house, which provided the four negotiators and psychologist with a video and telephone link with Henkel, Parks said.

About 9:30 p.m., two hours after negotiators arrived, Henkel released his wife. He surrendered at 10:02 p.m. after shots were fired in the basement. Shots also were heard from the basement about 6:30 p.m.

Deputies recovered more than a dozen guns from the house, half of them handguns, Parks said. Henkel has a permit to carry concealed weapons.

"Everything worked out really good, everyone lived," Parks said. "It could have gone south really fast."

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Township grants variances

Published Thursday, February 1, 2007 3:54:01 PM Central Time

By JASON JUNO

Ironwood Daily Globe Staff Writer

MERRIWEATHER -- An assisted-living facility on Lake Gogebic is one step closer to fruition if developer Dan Peterson can get state permits and the financing.

The Bergland Township Board of Appeals approved the variances necessary to allow for construction of the facility on Lake Gogebic off M-64 in Merriweather.

Variances were granted with conditions. Peterson must have the license and permits from the State of Michigan before he gets a building permit from the township. The variances are also specified for an assisted-living facility.

Getting local approval was the biggest obstacle, Peterson said. He said he is confident he can get financing for the \$4 to \$5 million project although he said it's not certain. And he said he has "no doubt" he can get the licenses.

He hopes to have financing in place by the end of May and have occupancy by fall 2008. He needs to get the plan fully developed now that it was approved.

"It's going to be a good thing for the community," Peterson said. "I've been anxious to get started."

He said he wasn't surprised it was approved because there wasn't a solid argument to stop it.

Arguments against it included his lack of state licenses, not having a clear definition on what an assisted-living facility was and the potential for hurting Lake Gogebic if a septic system must be put in.

Dave Anderson, president of the board appeals, said he voted no for most of the variances.

"I'm an older person and I don't like to see change," he said.

Peterson said he needed local approval before a state license. The state does not use the term assisted-living facility.

Getting a state license can take some time and is dependent on the facilities and the people involved meeting state requirements, said Maureen Sorbet, with the Department of Human Services. It also depends on the exact type of facility he plans to build.

It won't be a nursing home, he said. If constant medical care is needed, this isn't the place to go.

It will be where people over the age of 60 go if they are alone and want to have company, Peterson said. Some of them may still even have cars they use to leave for a week at a time. They can still take care of themselves.

"It's an apartment for elderly people basically," he said.

Peterson still hopes to get a sewer system extended from the Hoop'N Holler Tavern to his property. But that can't be done if Bergland Township doesn't extend it to the tavern first. In that case, he said he would have to construct a state-approved septic system across the street.

Both of his neighbors, to the north and south, where there will be 100 foot buffers with pine trees, approve of the project, Peterson said.

He agreed to move the building slightly so it would not be 15 feet off the neighbor's property. The ordinance called for a 200-foot buffer.

Peterson had the property and wanted to find a use for it. That was three years ago.

"It just hit me that might work really well," he said.

It will be a high-end facility, he said. Sixth to sixth-five percent of the 45 rooms will have a view of Lake Gogebic. There will also be a public area for residents to view the lake.

If the license from the state is not issued within 18 months, the variances will expire unless Peterson applies for an extension.



Tax credit often goes unclaimed

February 2, 2007

BY SUSAN TOMPOR

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Mark W. Everson would like to see more working taxpayers who are struggling to pay their bills get any money they're due through the Earned Income Tax Credit.

And he'd like them to avoid taking out costly refund anticipation loans.

"I don't like refund anticipation loans," Everson said in a telephone conference on Thursday. "I consider the RALs predatory in most cases."

Nearly 9.6 million taxpayers nationwide paid about \$960 million in loan fees -- plus \$100 million in other fees -- to get refund anticipation loans in 2005, according to the latest figures available.

About 30% of low-income taxpayers who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit handed out money to get quick cash.

Everson spoke Thursday as part of Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness day -- an outreach effort that involved community groups and others getting the word out on the credit.

Although 21.4 million taxpayers received the Earned Income Tax Credit last year, the IRS estimates that one in four eligible taxpayers failed to claim the credit.

For 2005, the latest figures available, nearly 651,000 taxpayers in Michigan received almost \$1.2 billion in the earned income credit. That included 101,000 filers in Detroit who received \$229 million.

The credit is available even if the taxpayer wouldn't normally be owed a refund. The taxpayer must have wages from a job.

The maximum credit for 2006 is \$4,536 if the taxpayer has two or more qualifying children.

The maximum is \$2,747 with one qualifying child. If the lower-income taxpayer has no children, the maximum is \$412.

To qualify, a taxpayer claiming no children can have an adjusted gross income of \$12,120 or less. The limit is \$14,120 if married and filing a joint return.

The income must be less than \$36,348 -- or \$38,348 if married and filing a joint return -- with two or more qualifying children. The limit is \$32,001-- or \$34,001 if married -- with one qualifying child.

The IRS said it receives more than 60% of all Earned Income Tax Credit claims during February.

It's a complicated credit. Everson said many taxpayers need help understanding whether they qualify.

The Accounting Aid Society in Michigan offers free tax preparation services and free electronic filing for low-income taxpayers at about 30 locations in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Livingston counties. To qualify, singles can have an annual income of up to \$20,000 and families can have an annual income up to \$39,000.

See www.accountingaidsociety.org or call 313-647-9620.

The earned income credit is also available for taxpayers who use Free File at www.irs.gov.

An interactive tool is also available at www.irs.gov to help taxpayers figure out whether they qualify. It is called the EITC Assistant and is available in English or Spanish. It's helpful to have W-2 forms available to start.

Contact **SUSAN TOMPOR** at 313-222-8876 or stomp@freepress.com.

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Detroit Free Press news briefs

February 2, 2007

100 are sought to aid tax program

The United Way for Southeastern Michigan is trying to recruit 100 volunteers by Feb. 6 to help low-income working families prepare their tax returns so they can receive Earned Income Tax Credit refunds.

The credit is a federal tax refund for the working poor that could go as high as \$4,500. Volunteers will receive free training on tax issues and credits and learn to use tax filing software. Those who complete the training will be certified in tax preparation.

Volunteers have to be 18 or older, be familiar with using computers and agree to volunteer at one of 30 free tax preparation sites.

For information or to sign up, call the United Way at 313-226-9430 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays, or go to www.uwsem.org.

Published February 2, 2007
[From Lansing State Journal]

Friday's letters to the editor

Stop welfare cheats

I'm sitting here listening to the news that Gov. Jennifer Granholm is expected to raise taxes! She needs to come to work with me one day and see how the welfare system is getting ripped off.

These single people who have Bridge cards do not need them. If you're single and have a job, you sure are capable of feeding yourself.

If you're trying to support yourself and children - fine! But the misuse of that card is disgusting.

If that's the way our system is going to run, then maybe all seniors or people who are working to keep food on our tables should quit and go on welfare, because I'll tell you I can't afford such luxuries.

I'm on Social Security and working part-time just to live. So, Gov. Granholm, you're invited to visit any Meijer, Wal-Mart, Target or other such store any time.

E.M. Sisco
Dimondale

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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February 2, 2007

Opinion: State departments show lack of fiscal responsibility

State Sen. Ron Jelinek

Michigan is facing one of the biggest budget deficits in recent memory and the task has fallen to the Legislature and the governor to fill the hole or start cutting.

Unfortunately, this situation recently was intensified by three state departments (State Police, Human Services and Corrections) that felt it acceptable to violate state law by overspending their budgets by a combined \$69.1 million -- and then not informing the Legislature of this violation until almost two months later.

Michigan's Constitution clearly dictates that each state department is provided a specific appropriation limit each year and that is the maximum amount to be spent on programs within that department. If a department spends more money than is allocated, it is in direct violation of both the Constitution and state law and must report the overexpenditure immediately to the Legislature.

However, what makes this situation so egregious is that this overspending was during the fiscal year which ended Sept. 30, 2006, but the Legislature was not informed until Nov. 21. This demonstrates a total lack of fiscal responsibility by the three departments involved and the governor's administration.

As a result of the length of time it took to report the overspending, the Legislature was not able to remedy the situation before the end of the 2006 legislative year through cuts. This resulted in almost \$70 million carrying over and contributing to the current year's \$800 million deficit. Put another way, this is \$70 million fewer resources that we have to use to help solve the Fiscal Year 2007 deficit.

Michigan residents deserve better than this. In tight fiscal times, Michigan families do what it takes to get by, even if it means giving up a few luxuries. If we're asking families to do this, it is expected that the state do the same. It is unacceptable for any state department to blatantly continue to spend money when it knows there is no money left to spend.

To prevent such irresponsible behavior in the future, the Legislature plans on updating the Management and Budget Act that governs state department budget activities. Creating stricter requirements will provide more accountability and control over each department's expenditures and reporting procedures. It is unfortunate that we have to do this, but it is apparent that we simply can't trust each department to follow the law.

The Legislature also will fill the more than \$69 million hole created by the departments last year along with the around \$819 million deficit in the coming budget year. It will not be easy, but we promise we will find the solution that is best for Michigan.

State Sen. Ron Jelinek, R-Three Oaks, is the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. E-mail: letters@detnews.com.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published February 2, 2007

Kratzer: Early out plan for state workers would add jobs, save Mich. money

Steve Kratzer lives in Eaton Rapids.

Younger workers are cheaper; new taxes aren't wise

The Senate Fiscal Agency recently estimated that if the state's general fund were cut to balance the budget, it could result in an additional 5,000 lost jobs. The domino effect from this action would be devastating, since members of a highly educated young work force with 'low seniority', would find them selves unemployed, and needing to join the mass exodus of talented citizens presently leaving Michigan.

State program cuts, bumping and reorganization would result in temporary interruption of state services ... at best. The report went on to say that prisons would close, as might other state facilities. The state would have to pay unemployment benefits while losing one of its most important resources: its young people.

While legislators and members of this administration grapple to find solutions, one answer rises to the surface: Trading retiring state workers for younger ones.

This could create 5,000 (or even more) new jobs for young professionals, who in turn would stay in this state, pay Michigan taxes and contribute to our 'sagging' economy. Just at a time when cost-saving measures are needed most, this result would be possible if Gov. Jennifer Granholm would endorse an early retirement program for state workers.

Pension payments to state employees are drawn from a separate, dedicated retirement fund that does not influence the state's budget. There are two new early retirement proposals -House Bills 4005 and 4075 under consideration in the Legislature.

Contrary to concerns previously expressed by members of her administration, a "brain drain" and "lack of essential services" are not the issues Five years ago, the world didn't come to an end after Michigan's last early out program. Quite to the contrary, services continued virtually uninterrupted; departments and divisions were streamlined; and efficiencies increased. The leaner government work force stood strong and resilient.

They rebounded quickly while managing to work both harder and smarter!

As for cost savings, replacement workers earn roughly half the wages of senior workers; they are not eligible for sick leave pay-outs or retirement pensions, or annual longevity bonuses. They earn less vacation time, too.

This administration has already sliced Michigan's budget to the bone. More furlough days and banked leave time for state workers are not the answer.

Time and again, early retirement is chosen by municipalities, schools systems and Fortune 500

companies as the most humane method of budget adjustment. This approach makes sense and cents.

Michigan citizens will have a hard time swallowing new taxes, such as a new sales tax on services for such things as child care, auto and appliance repair, hair cuts, golf, bowling, attorney fees. There's already objection to substantially increased license/registration fees and to imposition of additional beer/wine taxes. These proposed fixes are unreasonable, at least until such time as every possible other alternative has been examined.

Legislators should be encouraged to adopt the early out program as a cost-saving measure.

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